

International Response Essay

A Response to *Leadership for Social Justice: A Transnational Dialogue*

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This paper makes the case for preparing school leaders for social justice and a new social order. In Kenya, little has been done and documented about school leadership programs for social justice. Scholars have generally appreciated leadership preparation for social justice in terms of professional discourses especially as initiated from the Western World. There is, therefore, the need to stretch such discourses further to actual program development and implementation given the rapid knowledge generation and sharing facilitated by technology in this era of globalization.

This is a conceptual article that is a product of content analysis of extant literature. The analysis revealed four dominant issues between educational leadership and social justice literatures that are essential for creating a new social order thus,

1. Conceptualizing social justice and a new social order in leadership preparation;

2. Going beyond traditional leadership preparation to leadership for social justice;
3. Moving toward critical pedagogy: leadership for liberation and commitment to social justice, and
4. Making connections between local and global research to extend leadership for social justice.

Conceptualizing Social Justice and a new Social Order in Leadership Preparation

This article appreciates the fact that 'social justice' is a relatively new terminology to the field of educational administration. Although the scholarship of social justice in the U.S.A supports the notion that educational leaders have a social and moral obligation to foster equitable school practices, processes, and outcomes for learners of different racial, socioeconomic, gender, cultural, disability, and sexual orientations backgrounds; the sexual orientations

backgrounds is not a socially accepted notion in the Kenyan environment. Furthermore, the social justice terminology is not easy to come by in the educational administration literature. This does not mean that these issues are not of concern in Kenya; there are many inequalities in relation to socioeconomic, gender, and disabilities. School leaders, as is rightly put in this paper, are potentially the architects and builders of a new social order where traditionally disadvantaged peoples have the same educational opportunities, and by extension social opportunities, as traditionally advantaged peoples. This is the more reason why the social justice issues and a new social order in leadership preparation need to be institutionalized and handled with deserving seriousness as suggested by the authors.

Beyond Traditional Leadership Preparation to Leadership for Social Justice

The authors propose that there are two strands to the approaches to the leadership preparation. There is the *historic administrative practice in public schools* and a *social justice approach to leadership preparation*. The first drew heavily from hierarchical and simplistic business models that obscured the rich diversity of public schools in the early twentieth century. This encouraged the promotion of standardization and regimentation of grade levels, teaching materials and curricula, and curricula tracking which were important in the preparation of administrators, mainly based on scientific management. While the historical overview of the

preparation of school leaders in U.S. reveal that there is the ideological (1820-1900), prescriptive (1900-1915), scientific (1947-1985) and dialectic (1986-present), in Kenya the preparation of school leaders only links up during the scientific period to date and with heavy reliance on what was filtering through from the West. In fact, it is possible to find some principals who have not had the experience to prepare them completely for the work they are required to do (Ministry of Education, 1979). It is not enough for principals to have excellent academic qualifications; they should also have appropriate experience and outstanding qualities of leadership and imagination (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). In Kenya there are no tailor-made programs for those preparing to become school principals. All those admitted into the pre-service teacher education program learn a few elements of educational administration that are infused into the program as a course. It is generally acknowledged that these elements of educational administration do not adequately prepare school leaders. It is this acknowledgement that propels the Ministry of Education to design and implement in-service leadership preparation programs for serving principals. There are also other organs which provide leadership development programs especially to serving principals and teachers. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) provides in-service training for curriculum leadership at primary (elementary), secondary, and tertiary levels, except universities. The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and the Kenya

Secondary Schools Principals Association (KSSPA) also provide leadership development packages to serving school leaders to strengthen their performance levels.

The second categorization is a *social justice approach* in which scholars have paid attention to practices and policies that marginalize students and pose challenging questions to school leaders, educational scholars, and the broader community to engage in discussions about leadership for social justice. The fact that educational leaders are not adequately prepared to lead public schools toward a greater understanding of diversity or to help change the social order applies to Kenya too. Practitioners and scholars in Kenya are not adequately and deliberately engaged in research that is meant to inform leadership preparation programs. As a result, university leadership preparation programs lack the capacity to impact on the practices and behaviors of future school leaders. They are general, centralized and not focused to specific school environments. There is also the misconception that pre-service teacher education programs are adequate for school leadership preparation and yet there is so much that needs to be known which is not part of the pre-service training. Due to this realization, there is in-service training packages that school principals and deputies undergo through the Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) programs organized and implemented during school holidays to improve their knowledge and skills levels. This is more of an arrangement within the Ministry of Education to raise the

performance levels of serving school leaders. However, there needs to be a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the universities in Kenya to develop and implement research-based leadership development programs that embrace diversity and social justice issues. Since principals in Kenya are expected to work in any part of the country according to the Teachers Service Commission Code of Regulations for Teachers, they have a lot of opportunities for promoting appreciation of diversity in school leadership.

Although scholars from Kenya participate in conferences and publish articles on educational leadership, the issues on social justice are evolving at a very slow pace. There is growing concern that research and inquiry needs to be more aligned to leadership preparation programs development for meaningful impact.

Moving Toward Critical Pedagogy: Leadership for Liberation and Commitment to Social Justice

The paper argues that critical pedagogy focuses on personal liberatory education through the development of critical consciousness that empowers learners to engage in critical dialogue that critiques and challenges oppressive social conditions nationally and globally and to envision and work towards a more just society (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). This is more of a progressive orientation to leadership development programs which has been embraced to a large extent in Kenya where educational leaders are expected to encourage and facilitate participatory

learning and leadership practices for a more egalitarian society. However, the extent to which the knowledge gained in pre-service and in-service education regarding critical pedagogy informs actual practice is an issue worthy of discussion.

Making Connections between Local and Global Research to Extend Leadership for Social Justice

The authors of this article appreciate the fact that sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, peace studies, law, and political science have much to offer research in leadership for social justice. This is important in providing awareness of historical and disciplinary discourses related to social justice in other academic fields as well as awareness of classic and cutting-edge conversations going on regarding equity-related constructs such as race, gender, ethics, etc from which leaders might learn lessons to guide their inquiry and practice (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). On the other hand, international and comparative education inquiry allows much greater insight into leadership for social justice, and helps scholars and practitioners to contextualize their work in a global context and in the context of multiple lines of theoretical and empirical inquiry.

Although educational leadership scholars have contributed a lot of outstanding conceptual works, case studies, and a few large-scale analyses of quantitative data, there is need to expand into other research designs, such as the dearth of quantitative, historical,

cross-cultural, comparative, international, and mixed-method studies of social justice. In addition, leadership for social justice scholars must consider the mode of communication, the audience, and the knowledge yielded through inquiry.

The paper makes it clear that in the United States, the federal political organization of education makes certain levels of education more important—in a policy-making sense—than others (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). In Kenya, there is a centralized system of education and policy decisions on various levels of education affect education across the country. For example, the policy decision of free primary and secondary education from 2003 and 2008, respectively, have had implications for school leadership practices country-wide with variations depending on resource endowments in various school environments. Generally, the urban schools are advantaged as compared to the rural schools and yet there is a uniform curriculum for the same levels of schools across the country. Despite all this, school leaders, regardless of their location, need to appreciate their work in relation to the global leadership programs and ensure that their work augments and is augmented by what is happening to school systems far removed from their own. This paper is a thorough literature review that makes a lot of sense in extending the frontiers from leadership preparation to leadership for social justice that focuses on a new social order.

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